U.N. Force ™&©1992 Brent Carpender & Paul Kowalski, ARR.

UN Force Unites Gauntlet Universe

Gauntlet Comics, Caliber Press's superhero imprint, has thus far consisted of a variety of unrelated superhero titles. For 1993, though, Caliber hopes to establish a core "Gauntlet Universe"—and the center of that superhero universe will be the ***U.N. Force.***

Created by Brent Carpenter, Paul Kowalski, and Aubrey Bradford, ***U.N. Force*** is the first ongoing full-color superhero title from Caliber; they hope the addition of color will convince fans to give the new Gauntlet Universe a closer look.

The U.N. Force is closely linked with the New World Order that has developed following the virtual collapse of communism. The super-team is comprised of twenty-five heroes from nineteen different nations; their goal is to help deal with the problems that might prove too difficult for any single nation or government. Their territory is the entire world, and they operate under the aegis of the U.N.

U.N. Force #1, a January release, will reveal how the team came to be; it will also offer flashbacks that spotlight various U.N. Force members' involvement in recent world events. The story details the efforts of twenty-five superheroes to overcome political and ideological differences so that they might work as an international team.

U.N. Force #1 will be released in two different formats. The standard edition, priced at $2.95, will feature a full-color wraparound cover; the $5.95 limited edition will feature metallic logo enhancements on the front cover as well as signatures from each of the creators. The book will continue on a monthly basis as a standard-format comic.

by Cliff Biggers

This Mystery Theater Is An Art, Not a Science

Wide lapels. Art Deco. Coupes with running boards. Dom Perignon. Gangsters. Appeasement. Big Bands. Gas Masks.

Gas masks?

If the last item seems incongruous to you right now, it'll all begin to make sense in early February, when ***Sandman Mystery Theatre #1*** reaches comic shops. This new monthly series stars Sandman—but it isn't the Sandman who's currently a comics favorite among savvy comics readers. This is the earlier Sandman—the *original* Sandman—firmly entrenched in his Golden Age milieu.

"Like the classic film noir detectives Sam Spade and Philip Marlow—with a streak of ***Twin Peaks***' Dale cooper added for good measure—Wesley Dodds is a man of mystery," DC's Patricia Jeres said. The Sandman is an enigma to everyone, a mystery man who covers himself from head to foot in a suit, a trenchcoat, a heavy full-face gas-mask, a fedora, and black leather gloves, he is a crime-fighter whose actions puzzle the police almost as much as the actions of the criminals he combats.

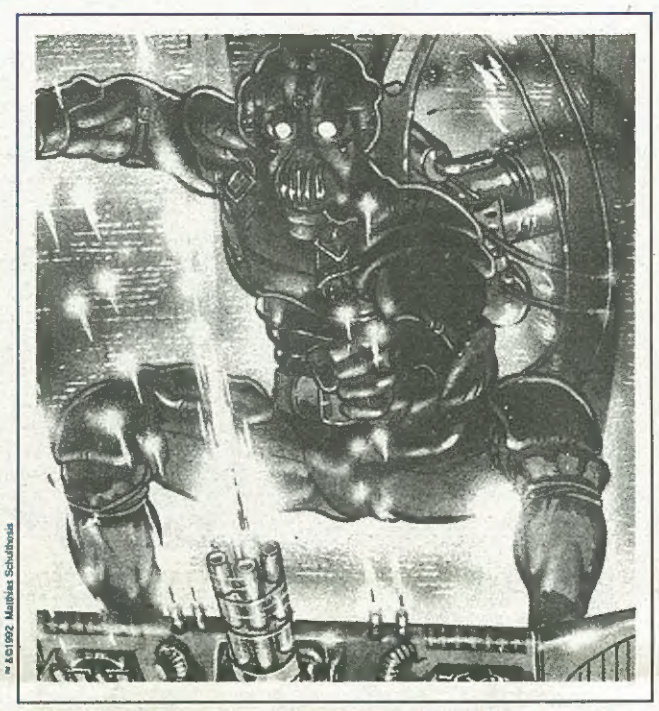
The Sandman's enemies are the costumed criminals of the earliest days of the costumed hero era—villains with names like the Tarantula, the Mist, and the Phantom of the World's Fair. His world is a 1930's New York that seems in some ways reminiscent of the world of the Shadow and Doc Savage—that is, it's based on reality as we know it, be we all can breathe a sigh of relief that reality was never this menacing, this disquieting.

Travelling through the glamorous world of New York nightlife and the seamy underworld of gangsters and worse, Dodds' Sandman is compelled by strange visions; at the scene of each crime he investigates, he leaves cryptic poems that contain subtle clues to the identity of the man behind the gas-mask. The Sandman's first adversary is The Tarantula, who, according to DC, "is determined to be the last dance on every young woman's card." Their confrontation occurs in a story that Patricia Jeres says "combines the best of two popular genres: detective story and psychological thriller."

Sandman Mystery Theatre is written by Matt Wagner, the acclaimed author of ***Grendel*** and ***Mage;*** Wagner has built a following for himself at DC as well, where he was praised for his superlative "Faces" story arc (spotlighting Two-Face) that appeared in ***Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*** #s 28-30. Wagner's partner for the Sandman Mystery Theatre story arc is Guy Davis, who is certainly no stranger to mystery tales with a suspenseful slant; Davis has been praised for his work as writer/artist of ***Baker Street,*** a punkish mystery-thriller with a Sherlockian slant. "Davis's rich style successfully evokes the eerie mood and textures of the era and imbues the Sandman with an unnerving, nightmarish quality of sheer terror," Jeres said. Gavin Wilson supplies an eye-catching painted photo cover for the premiere issue of the series.

Sandman Mystery Theatre #1, a $1.95 comic scheduled for February 11th release, is a new addition to DC's sophisticated-reader Vertigo imprint.

by Cliff Biggers



Propellerman Blows Into Comic Shops All the Way From Europe

A good many American fans have fond memories of comics from the Silver Age, while American creators working in the medium today are very influenced by Kirby, Ditko, Infantino, Anderson, Kubert, and other greats from the 1960's. Other fans and creators, possessing a more sophisticated, international view of comics, cite European artists and writers as their primary influences. Some of those who tend to look with disdain on American comics might be surprised to hear German artist Matthias Schultheiss name American comics from the early 1960's as his single greatest comic book influence—an influence to which he pays homage in his upcoming Dark Horse comic ***Propellerman.***

"The European heroes had no personality, no physiological make-up; they were always so clean. The American comic-book characters had these personalities; they had an edge to them," Schultheiss said. 'Additionally, Schultheiss drew additional influences from American literature—in particular authors like Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Charles Bukowski. Schultheiss has even managed to combine two of his influences—comics and Bukowski—in his comic book adaptations of ***A Couple of Winos*** and eight other Bukowski short stories.

In ***Propellerman,*** however, Bukowski returns to the glory days of American superhero comics to create a super-powered character with a bit of an existential touch. Propellerman is a mystery figure, a hero with a large propeller on his back and a jet-powered rocket sled beneath his feet. He soars through the skies of his overcrowded city, searching for adventure as well as a key to his own past. Propellerman, you see, has no idea who or what he is...but he is convinced that the answer can be found somewhere in his city.

While Schultheiss is influenced by American comics of the 1960's, his admiration for that era hasn't led him to slavishly imitate its style and look. Instead, he is bending the superheroics of the early Silver Age to his own visual style. Schultheiss is fully painting each page of his comic book rather than rendering it in pencil, ink, and colors; at the same time, he avoids the soft-focus "painterly" look that typifies many modern painted comics, preferring instead a harder-line look that evokes the feel of the Silver Age.

Propellerman, an eight-issue bimonthly miniseries written and illustrated by Schultheiss, begins on January 14th; each issue of the series is priced at $2.95.

by Alex Kirkland

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COMIC SHOP NEWS™
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QUICKSHOTS

After Midnight...

CSN has already told you about ***Fantastic Four Unlimited*** and ***Spider-Man Unlimited***, two new quarterly titles debuting this winter. Marvel's growing line of quarterly comics adds another title in February with the release of ***Midnight Sons Unlimited,*** a 64-page quarterly featuring Ghost Rider, Johnny Blaze, Morbius, Nightstalker, and the Darkhold Redeemers in separate adventures. ***Midnight Sons Unlimited #1***'s creators include *Howard Mackie, Dan Chichester, Len Wein, Chris Cooper, Joe Quesada, Klaus Janson, Jerry Bingham,* and *Cynthia Martin; Mark Texeira* supplies the cover. As with all ***Unlimited*** titles, ***Midnight Sons Unlimited*** is printed on high-gloss ***Marvel Fanfare***-style Hudson paper with cardstock covers; look for the first $3.95 issue on February 18th. (And keep an eye on future issues of ***CSN*** for more news about ***2099 Unlimited, X-Men Unlimited,*** and other ***Unlimited*** books!)

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Tundra Is Frank About Their Frazetta Plans

In the 1970's and early 1980's, editors *Ian* and *Betty Ballantine* oversaw the production of a stunning quartet of books spotlighting the art of the incomparable *Frank Frazetta*. Alas, all four volumes of ***The Art of Frank Frazetta*** are long out of print and very hard to come by nowadays—but Tundra Publishing doesn't plan to leave readers Frazetta-less for long. In late '93, the company will offer a new volume of unpublished Frazetta paintings; if you don't want to wait almost a year, though, you can enjoy a small taste of Frazetta's work in a series of limited edition posters produced by Tundra. Each high-quality poster features a new Frazetta image previously unavailable in poster form. "This series of limited-edition prints will sell out so fast it will probably cause natural disasters all over the planet," Tundra said of these posters, which are priced at $20 each. If you don't want to get caught up in the global turmoil, be sure to reserve a copy of these Frazetta prints—and tell the folks at your local comic shop that ***CSN*** sent you, okay?...

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Evil Lives

Evil Ernie, the Malibu Comics hit from early 1992, seemed to have reached an insurmountable conclusion at the end of the first miniseries. However, writer *Brian Pulido* figured that any conclusion he created couldn't be insurmountable—and he turned out to be correct, because Ernie is back this spring in a new series from a new publisher, Chaos Comics.

Evil Ernie: The Resurrection, a four-issue full color miniseries illustrated by *Steven Hughes* and *Mark Morales*, turns the Evil One loose on Washington DC, which hasn't seen a menace so diabolical since the last Congressional budget hearings... Additionally, Pulido has signed artists *Joe Quesada, Chris Bachalo,* and *Tom Morgan* to supply covers for the series. Keep an eye on ***CSN*** in upcoming months for an interview with Pulido and more behind-the-scenes info on Ernie's return.

Chroma-Tick Offers Fans a Great Deal

Chroma-Tick #6 continues NEC's reprinting of early issues of ***The Tick*** in full color, but there's another reason that Tick fans will want this issue, even if they have the original book in black and white. Not only is NEC adding updated editorial material to supplement the 25-page Tick story, but they've also added a bonus trading card sheet with new ***Tick Trading Cards***. These cards are available only with this book, so this'll be a must-have if you want to keep your Tick trading card series complete. ***Chroma-Tick #6***, a $3.50 comic, is scheduled for February release.

Nomad Gets a Change of Artists and A Change of A Dress

Nomad has featured art by both *S. Clarke Hawbaker* and *Patrick Oliffe* in its ten-issue run, but as of ***Nomad #11,*** the series gets a new regular artist: *Rick Mays*, who is described by ***Nomad*** editor *Glenn Herdling* as an "artist to watch." Mays joins writer Fabian Nicieza to present a story about the murder of cross-dressers in Albuquerque; Nomad dons a rather striking disguise to try to prevent the crimes. ***Nomad #11,*** a $1.75 comic, is scheduled for mid-January release.

DC Offers Fans an Inexpensive Night

Batman: Night Cries, the critically acclaimed hardcover graphic novel by *Archie Goodwin* and *Scott Hampton*, sold out in its original hardcover edition shortly after release, leaving a lot of fans unable to locate a copy of this hard-edged, human story of child abuse and redemption. Fans who weren't able to find a copy of the hardcover before it sold out won't have to do without for much longer, though, because DC is offering a trade paperback edition of the graphic novel in March for about half the price of the hardcover. ***Batman: Night Cries***, a 96-page $12.95 graphic novel pitting Batman on Commissioner Gordon on the track of a vengeful vigilante who targets child abusers, is scheduled for March 4th release.

Robotech Reaches a MaCrossroads

Eternity's ***Robotech*** series shifts into high gear in 1993 with the addition of Robotech one-shots, miniseries, and an ongoing series, ***Robotech: Return to Macross***. The new series, written by *Bill Spangler* and illustrated by *Shoichi Kobayashi*, takes Robotech back to its roots—as it brings the SDF-1 back to Earth.

The Zor didn't like the idea of either the Robotech Masters or the Invid having control of the superdimensional fortress, so they send it to Earth. Some, such as Roy Fokker, are very happy to have it in orbit around their planet; others, such as "The Faithful," believe it's the work of the devil and want to destroy it. All the original Robotech characters are on hand in this all-new series, which makes it a great jumping-on point for Robotech fans who were put off by the many new faces in ***Robotech II. Robotech: Return to Macross #1,*** a $2.50 comic, is scheduled for March release.

Mind War

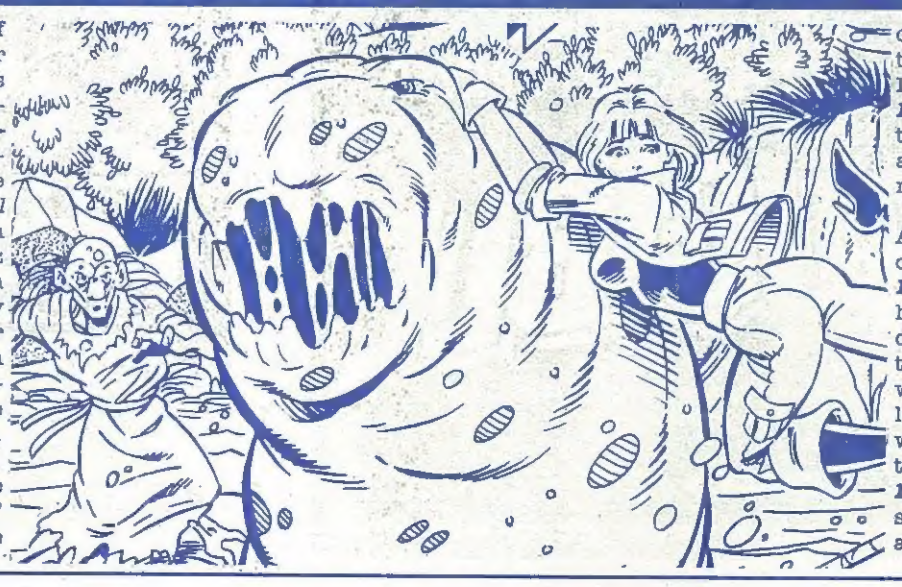
Gestalt, a new miniseries debuting in February from NEC, is a comic set in World War II—but it can't be classified as just another war comic. As NEC put it, "This six-issue monthly series by *Andrew Hite* blends historical accuracy with the fantastic"; its protagonist, Katerina Petrovich, is a young woman who has been subjected to an experimental drug program during the siege of Leningrad—a program that has given her the ability to read the minds of those around her. Naturally, with this ability, all sides would like to control Katerina... but she's determined to remain a free woman.

Each issue of ***Gestalt*** will feature a cover design based on the flag of one of the major nations involved in the war; the first issue will, naturally, feature the hammer-and-sickle flag of the USSR, Katerina's home country. NEC is strongly supporting ***Gestalt;*** to ensure that it reaches the widest audience possible, they're lowering the cover price on the book to $1.95, even though it's being published in the same format that NEC utilizes in its $2.75 comics. Furthermore, they guarantee that the six-issue series will appear on a monthly basis, and that they will keep back issues of the series available for as long as possible to allow stores to reorder the title. "A lower price, a strict publishing schedule, stunning colorful covers, back issue availability, and an unusually evocative story,"

Ex-Mutants Gets Some Youngblood In the Writing Department

Hank Kanalz, the scripter of Image Comics' ultra-popular ***Youngblood*** and ***Brigade,*** is taking over the writing honors on Malibu Comics' ***Ex-Mutants*** after the completion of the first three-issue story arc, joining artists *Paul Pelletier* and *Ken Branch*. In his first storyline, Kanalz sends the team away from Professor Kildare as they search for a new power source for his conversion machine. As you might expect, their quest leads to one misadventure after another.

"We've tried to give the group a purpose in life," Kanalz said. "They're the only humans left on Earth that we know about so far..." In upcoming issues of ***Ex-Mutants,*** Kanalz intends to touch on ecological concerns as well as family values and religion.



According to *Tom Mason*, co-creator and co-writer of ***Ex-Mutants,*** "I'm more than happy to turn over the burden of writing a monthly team book to a hot young writer like Hank Kanalz. I'm looking forward to seeing what he can do with characters I helped create." ***Ex-Mutants #4,*** Kanalz' first issue, is scheduled for February release.

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New Anime Release Ready to KO the Competition

Now here's a nice, sedate video; set in a suburban high school for girls, it's the story of two good friends and a third girl who'd like to break up that friendship. While it may sound like a low-key human interest storyline, it's a bit more than that—because the story is set in the high-tech futuristic post-apocalypse Graviton High School for Girls, and one of the girls in question possesses a strength that can only be described as superhuman. Her name is A-ko, and the video in question is ***Project A-ko.***

A-ko is a seventeen-year-old student whose closest friend is C-ko. Unfortunately for them, the scheming B-ko doesn't want that friendship to continue, so she's determined to steal C-ko's loyalties away from A-ko. According to U.S. Manga Corps, "B-ko becomes the irresistible force and A-ko the immovable object as the action explodes against the unsuspecting city. B-ko goes up against the invincible A-ko with her arsenal of powerful robot suits, including the most powerful of all, 'Akagiyama 23.'" And while all this is going on, there's an enormous alien spaceship heading towards earth, its mission unknown...

Project A-ko, which won the Best Film of the Year Awards from the Society for Promotion of Japanese Animation, is presented in dubbed English (that's right—no subtitles to read!), along with a musical score by *Joe Carbone* and *Richie Zito*. The $34.95 video is scheduled for January release.

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Vampirella In Three Very-Well-Rounded Dimensions

Remember that classic Vampirella poster from the 1970's, the one in which she reached out towards the viewer with a bat perched on her right hand? Well, Graphitti Designs has something more than a poster or a print to help jog your memory: they've created a three-dimensional sculpture based on the classic pose. Sculpted by *Clayborne Moore* and *Jon Vaughn*, the ten-inch-tall sculpture is produced in cold-cast porcelain with a painted bronze finish. Only 500 of these deluxe statues are being produced, so don't blink or you'll miss 'em!

This piece is a perfect addition to any fan's display cabinet. "Her outstretched hand, with the bat resting on it, creates a three-dimensional visual that looks great from all angles," Graphitti's Bob Chapman said. This ultra-lavish ***Vampirella Statue*** is priced at $200, so be sure to talk with the friendly personnel at your local comic shop if you're interested (and, as always, tell 'em you heard about it in ***CSN,*** okay?).

Help Your Fellow Fan

Hurricane Andrew did immeasurable damage to Southern Florida last August, then it swept on into Louisiana and devastated that area as well; hundreds of thousands of people were affected, and many of them are still affected daily by the loss of homes, jobs, and personal possessions. Many comic companies, including Marvel and DC, have made donations of books and money to relief efforts; now Marvel is making it easy—and fashionable—for fans to make a donation as well. The ***Marvel Aid T-Shirt*** is being produced to raise money for the Salvation Army Hurricane Relief Fund; Romita's Raiders and Comic Images have donated their time and effort to produce this eye-catching shirt, and comic shop owners are making it available to comic fans at a cost little above their wholesale price so that as much money as possible can go to the relief efforts. This shirt may cost a little more than standard t-shirts, but there's a great reason for the extra cost. If you want to help out those who dearly need the assistance—and you want to be able to wear a shirt that informs the world of your eleemosynary impulses—let your local comic shop know that you have to have the ***Marvel Aid T-Shirt.***

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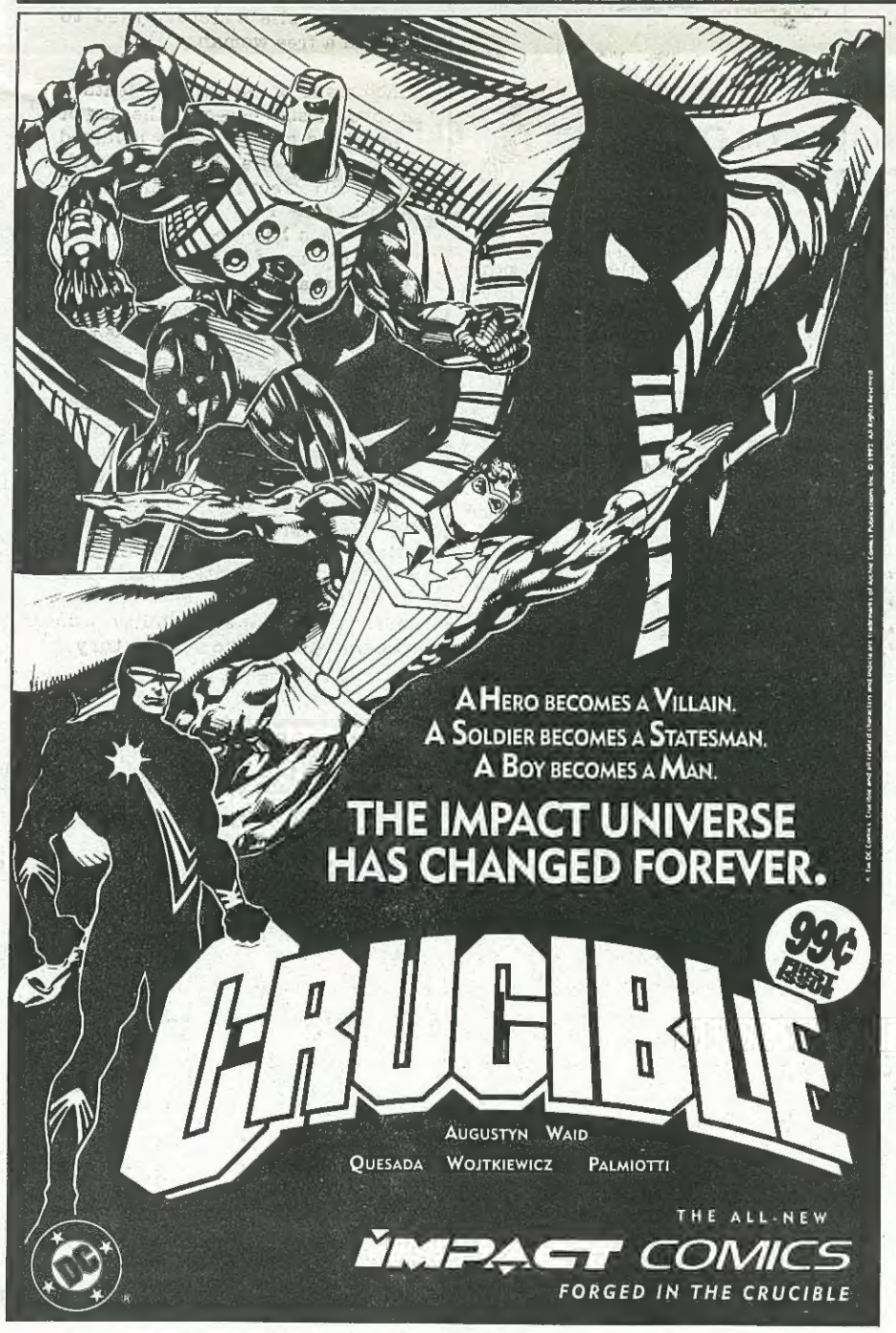

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JANUARY HOT PICKS!

by cliff biggers

The forecast for January is a real scorcher, with sizzlers predicted each and every week. Of course, we're not talking about the weather here—we're talking about comic books, because there are some really hot titles scheduled for release during the chill days of January. From the number of outstanding books slated for release this month, it doesn't look like publishers consider January a "dead" month for comics; quite the contrary, a number of publishers seem to be rolling out some of their biggest projects in months! It's a particularly strong month for Marvel, who dominates the Hot Picks this month with eight titles—but both DC and Image have some pretty impressive to make the winter a bit warmer...

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™ & © 1992 DC Comics

ACTION COMICS 686
SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL 21
SUPERMAN 77

The final installments of "Funeral For a Friend" are certain to be as hot as the initial installments of this landmark storyline. Non-fans who were drawn into comic shops because of the news coverage about Superman's death continue to return for each week's installment of this post-death storyline; obviously the Man of Steel had many more friends than anyone (including a lot of comic shop owners) anticipated. These books are likely to be truly hot in the long run, for the number of readers who want copies of each installment of this storyline seems to far exceed the print-run of the book. *(DC, $1.25@)*

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ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES 1

Aliens remains Dark Horse's most popular license, and for good reason; Dark Horse continues to stretch the boundaries of the Aliens concept, proving that there are many engrossing stories yet to be told. This new story, about a group of foul-up Marines stuck with garbage detail—where they will soon meet with an Aliens presence, is far, far more entertaining (and far, far more in keeping with continuity) than ***Aliens 3.*** And, at twelve issues, this is the longest Dark Horse ***Aliens*** miniseries to date. *(Dark Horse, $2.50)*

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 375
VENOM 2

In ***Amazing Spider-Man 375***, Spider-Man faces off against Venom in a storyline that ties in with the Venom limited series; in ***Venom 2***, Venom tries to settle into his new California digs,only to find that the families of some of his former victims have more malevolent plans for his future. Both issues are produced by David Michelinie and Mark Bagley, the team that's made ***Amazing Spider-Man*** far and away the best-selling of all the Spidey series. Even better, ***Amazing Spider-Man 375*** features a can't-miss holografx foil cover that'll be as popular with fans as last summer's holograms. ***Amazing Spider-Man 374*** disappeared from the racks far more quickly than most retailers anticipated, so you know that the demand for both of these books is going to be phenomenal. *(Marvel, $2.95@)*

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST 1

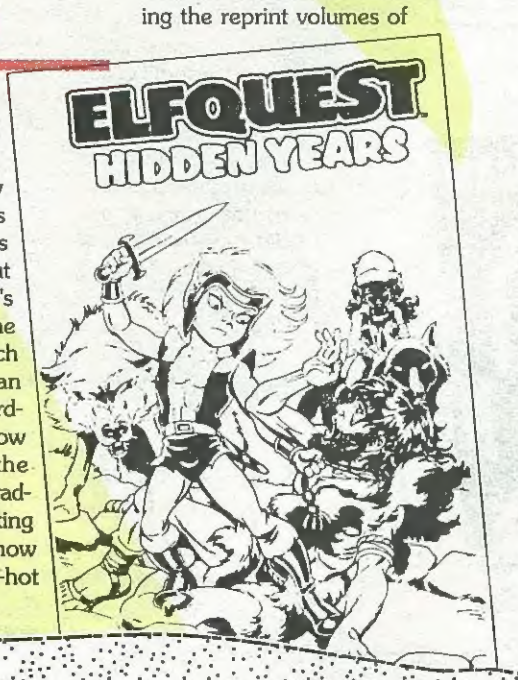
Don't think Disney here, think Vincent and Catherine. The television fantasy-romance comes to comics in a visually impressive fully-painted series that conveys the lush look and feel of Ron Koslow's cult-favorite television show. Rather than picking up where the post-Catherine television series left off, Innovation has chosen to return to the Vincent-and-Catherine storylines that made the show so popular. This series is at least equal to the two Beauty and the Beast one-shots produced by First Comics a few years ago—and perhaps even better, because it's the first part of a long-running series instead of a single-issue story. *(Innovation, $2.50 for the standard edition, $3.95 for the signed edition)*

CROW COLOR PORTFOLIO

The bad news is that this is the last ***Crow*** work Jim O'Barr intends to do for the foreseeable future. The good news is that it features some new ***Crow*** work by O'Barr—and ***Crow*** fans like us will take anything we can get! Three of the six color plates are enlarged versions of the paintings done for Tundra's editions of ***The Crow;*** the other three are totally new for this edition. Portfolios seem to have lost some of their allure in recent years—but the Crow remains so popular that this portfolio should be the exception to the rule. *(Tundra, $24.95)*

DARKER IMAGE 1

Yes, this book has three stories by talented creators like Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Sam Kieth, and William Messner-Loebs. Yes, it features new heroes who may graduate from this anthology book to their own series if they prove popular enough. But the real guarantee of Darker Image's sell-out status is the inclusion of one of three different trading cards in each copy of the book; if you've kept an eye on fan response to trading-card-polybagged-books recently, you know that they've disappeared from the shelves in short order. The Image trading cards have resulted in skyrocketing sales for Wizard; now we can see how much they boost sales for already-hot Image comics. *(Image, $2.50)*

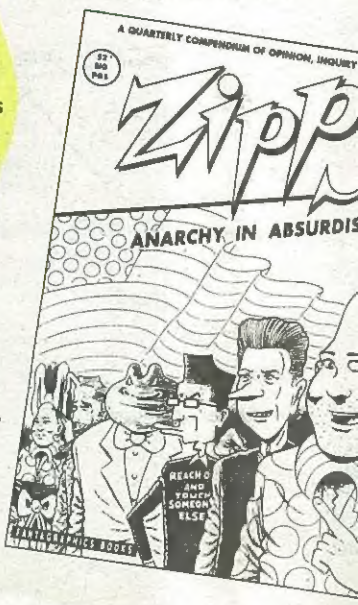


DEATH: THE HIGH COST OF LIVING 1

When DC conducted a poll in the summer of '91 to determine which characters fans most wanted to see in their own miniseries, Death won hands down. Neil Gaiman was confident that it would work out that way—not because of any egotism on his part, but because as Death's writer/creator, he's aware of just how very popular this character is. DC is also aware of her popularity, since they're using her miniseries as the linchpin of their entire Vertigo rollout this month. If it's a Vertigo book, you know it's going to have high quality stories and cutting-edge art; but if it's a Vertigo book written by Neil Gaiman featuring a character this popular, you know it's also going to have a very short shelf-life (perhaps as short as Death's mortal existence?...) *(DC/Vertigo, $1.95)*

ELFQUEST: THE HIDDEN YEARS HC

For a decade now, ***Elfquest*** trade paperbacks have been perennial best-sellers; alas, most fans couldn't afford the more expensive limited edition hardcovers that accompanies those early trade paperbacks. Now, to make sure that everyone can afford a durable hardcover edition of ***Elfquest,*** Wendy and Richard Pini are releasing the reprint volumes of



this new series in hardcover only—and at a price scarcely higher than the cost of a trade paperback! Expect ***Elfquest*** fans to show their gratitude by latching onto a copy of the hardcover as soon as they see it... *(WaRP, $19.95)*

about a year now; it's only appropriate that their first quarterly title would star the quartet that launched the Marvel Age of Comics over thirty-one years ago. It's hard to believe that the Fantastic Four have supported only one team book—but it's about time that they earned a second title. The new series will emphasize book-length stories (which are always popular) presented in a high-quality Hudson-paper format with cardstock covers, so it's sure to be popular with regular Fantastic Four readers—and it's likely to attract fans who haven't found the ***Fantastic Four*** monthly title accessible thus far. *(Marvel, $3.95)*

COVER OF THE MONTH

done, and it offers an alternate view of Marvel's future that is far more intriguing (in a morbid way) than the future as presented in the Marvel 2099 titles. Few comics are more fun to read than this... *(Marvel, $5.95)*

OVERLOOKED

Rumiko Takahashi's ***Ranma 1/2*** is almost as quirky in its own way as Marc Hempel's ***Gregory;*** it's a book that almost defies description, but it's one of the most entertaining reads on the stands today. ***Ranma 1/2*** is the story of a boy who is sometimes a girl—not because of any transvestite-transsexual tendency, but because of a curse that makes him change sex when doused with cold or hot water. His father has it even worse: he changes into a giant bear when he gets wet! If you missed out on the first run of this engrossing series, Viz is making it easy for you to find out just what you've been missing: they're launching a second miniseries this month. ***Ranma 1/2 Part Two #1*** is the most fun for the money that you'll find on the comic shelves this month; don't be left out!

SIZZLER!

IRON MAN 290

Remember how quickly that foil-embossed cover for ***Iron Man 288*** disappeared from the comic shop racks? Well, this cover has the foil-embossed companion piece to that cover, and it features Tony Stark's all-new armor design, more high-tech and ominous than ever before. No one who's ever enjoyed ***Iron Man*** will be able to resist it. *(Marvel, $2.95)*

MYS-TECH WARS 1

This is what all the Marvel UK titles have been leading up to: an all-out war between Mys-TECH and the best heroes of both Marvel and Marvel UK, with the fate of the Marvel Universe hanging in the balance. This series will feature an all-star lineup that includes the X-Men, X-Force, and the Fantastic Four; look for it to duplicate ***Battletide***'s success with fans who thrive on these all-out cosmic wars for the survival of humanity. *(Marvel UK, $1.95)*

WILDSTAR

SECRET DEFENDERS 1

The Defenders are back—and while they're not the Defenders that older fans may remember, they're sure to be quite popular with today's readers. The team is headed by Dr. Strange, but it's rotating line-up will include virtually all of Marvel's hot heroes, including Wolverine, Ghost Rider, and the Hulk. The first issue has an added guarantee of sellout success: a foil-embossed cover. *(Marvel, $2.75)*

ENIGMA 1

Vertigo's first new title is an existential-absurdist look at the effects of a superhero on a young fan's life—and the effects of that young fan on the superhero he idolizes. The hero is Enigma, and Peter Milligan and Duncan Fegredo present his story through the eyes of one of his fans. Just as Image titles benefit from the recognition associated with the Image name, so will Vertigo books—although the audience is very, very different. *(DC/Vertigo, $2.50)*

GEOF DARROW'S COMICS & STORIES

American fans know Geof Darrow only because of his stunning work on the Frank-Miller-written ***Hard Boiled***; this month, Dark Horse makes it possible for fans to find out what got the comics world so excited about Darrow to begin with. This French hardcover has never been available in America until now; there are only a limited number being released to the American market, so it'll disappear in record time. *(Dark Horse, $29.95)*

FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED 1

Marvel's been working on a line of quarterly books for about a year now; it's only appropriate that their first quarterly title would star the quartet that launched the Marvel Age of Comics over thirty-one years ago. It's hard to believe that the Fantastic Four have supported only one team book—but it's about time that they earned a second title. The new series will emphasize book-length stories (which are always popular) presented in a high-quality Hudson-paper format with cardstock covers, so it's sure to be popular with regular Fantastic Four readers—and it's likely to attract fans who haven't found the ***Fantastic Four*** monthly title accessible thus far. *(Marvel, $3.95)*

INCREDIBLE HULK: FUTURE IMPERFECT 2

Part two of Peter David and George Perez's Hulk miniseries is going to be as popular as the premiere issue; it's some of the best work that either of this popular creators have done, and it offers an alternate view of Marvel's future that is far more intriguing (in a morbid way) than the future as presented in the Marvel 2099 titles. Few comics are more fun to read than this... *(Marvel, $5.95)*

SILVER SURFER/WARLOCK: RESURRECTION 1

Jim Starlin is back! Oh, sure, Starlin never really left—but for the past few years, he's worked as a writer rather than an artist, and most of his fans have missed his art. Now he's back, writing and illustrating a miniseries featuring one of his most popular characters, and he's even inking his own work for the first issue! *(Marvel, $2.50)*

SPARKPLUG 1

Heroic Publishing seems to be competing with AC Comics for that cheesecake-heroine niche; ***Sparkplug*** is more than just another cheesecake title, though, and it's the "more" that should appeal to readers who have previously overlooked Heroic's output. Lou Mougin and Scott Clark still present a buxom, svelte heroine, but the storyline is well-crafted and it presents an image of modern Germany that breaks away from the typical comic book German stereotype. *(Heroic, $2.95)*

SPAWN 9

Neil Gaiman is the guest-writer on this special issue of ***Spawn;*** is there really anything else that need be said? McFarlane's art will continue to attract fans who'd enjoy this book no matter who reads it; Gaiman's storyline, however, should appeal to those readers who dismissed ***Spawn*** as an "art book" rather than a "story book." Since Gaiman's tale follows a month after Alan Moore's issue of ***Spawn,*** a lot of readers are going to have to reevaluate... *(Image, $1.95)*

SPIDER-MAN HOLOGRAM SET

Okay, it's not really a comic book—but this oversized cardstock plaque featuring all four holograms from last summer's Spidey celebration issues is going to a must-have for fans who collect cover enhancements, cards, or bonus items. Since the production on this hologram sheet is going to be far more limited than the print run of any Spidey title, it'll be a hard one to find in a matter of weeks. *(Marvel, $19.95)*

WILDSTAR: SKY ZERO 1

Why isn't Jerry Ordway one of the biggest names in comics today? There are a lot of us who have asked that question more than once; Ordway remains one of the industry's most consummate craftsmen, turning out stunning, powerful art that seems to possess an equal part of old-time storytelling and newfangled flash. ***Wildstar: Sky Zero,*** a four-issue miniseries by Ordway and Gordon, may make Ordway the fan-fave he deserves to be; it's a well-written, complex miniseries that has a strong story to tell. *(Image, $1.95)*

ZIPPY QUARTERLY 1

Fantagraphics and Zippy seem like a natural pairing; both have a loyal following, both appeal to fans who want more than superheroes, and both have proven their staying power. So who better to publish a Zippy series featuring classic Bill Griffith strips and some very hard-to-find material as well? This is a book that's likely to be severely underordered by some retailers, so don't think twice when you see it—grab it! *(Fantagraphics, $4.95)*

Continuity Ready to Overcome Lack of Continuity

For several years, Continuity has had ambitious plans to position itself as a major player in the superhero comics business; the company has had significant talent, concepts on a par with its competition, and an editorial staff with the vision and commitment to deliver what fans want. Alas, Continuity's problem for the last few years has been getting those books published; the company has been plagued by delays, cancelled or postponed titles, and months-long lapses between issues of multi-part storylines. That's a problem that Continuity has overcome, according to Kristine Adams, Vice President and Associate Publisher of Continuity.

"We stopped production of our regular comics simply because we wanted to make a splash in the marketplace. Regular comics don't do that any more, no matter how good they are. We decided our 'splash' should be a massive crossover with incentive comics, trading cards, gimmick covers, and giveaway material," Adams said.

"Now our only problem was the financing." According to Adams, Continuity had always been short on the capital necessary to complete the ambitious plans the company envisioned. "Since we are one of the only, if not the only, comic company that is not financed by an outside investor, we decided to look for an investor. It took a few months, but we succeeded." The result is a new, revitalized Continuity that will relaunch its line of comics with a massive crossover storyline entitled **Deathwatch 2000.**

Deathwatch 2000 will run through all six of Continuity's core titles. Those books, all of which are plotted by Neal Adams and written by Peter Stone, include:

Armor, pencilled by Sal Velluto and inked by Rudy Nebres;
Ms. Mystic, pencilled by Wayne Turner, inked by Saichan;
Megalith, pencilled by Ernesto Infante and inked by Saichan;
CyberRad, pencilled and inked by Richard Bennett;
Earth 4, pencilled by Aron Weisenfeld and inked by Richard Bennett; and
Hybrids, pencilled by Malcolm Davis and inked by Neal Adams and Chris Ivy.

The storyline has a strongly ecological slant: it begins when the half-alien Hybrids inform the Earth's heroes that the destruction of the ozone layer by chloroflourocarbons and pollutants is common among civilized planets in the universe. Furthermore, the Hybrids reveal, the devastation is progressing so rapidly on Earth that the planet will be a dead zone by the year 2000; the Hybrids have come here to observe this disaster (thus the title, **Deathwatch 2000**) if they cannot prevent it.

Once the Hybrids arrive on Earth, though, they learn that the planet may not last until the year 2000; there is another force, the Hellbenders, that is trying to rush the destruction of our planet for their own ends. The Hellbenders launch a successful surprise attack against the Continuity heroes, defeating them and subsequently gathering control of nuclear weaponry to carry out their plan. Once the ecology is destroyed, the Hellbenders will turn the Earth over to their allies, the underground mutants known as the Titans, who cannot survive in pure air and sunshine.

Deathwatch 2000 starts in earnest in May, but the groundwork for the storyline is laid in April with the release of prelude issues of all six titles. ***Megalith #0*** and ***Hybrids #0***, two of the six prelude books, will be incentive comics released in conjunction with the first issues of the other four titles; these zero issues will be polybagged together and will be released in limited numbers based on store orders for the other parts of the prelude (*a la* Valiant's ***Unity #0***).

In May, Continuity will launch the two-month **Deathwatch 2000** storyline that will run through all six books. Additionally, Continuity will produce two very limited-edition bonus comics: ***Valeria the She-Bat*** #s 1 & 2. Both issues will be written and drawn by Neal Adams. According to Continuity, "This will be the first superhero comic pencilled and rendered by Neal since ***Ms. Mystic #2***, way back in the early 1980's. Neal has sworn these will be the most dramatic, incredible books he's ever done. For those who may ask how Neal can handle the workload in addition to his advertising work, the first issue of ***She-Bat*** is completely pencilled and dialogued. Inking is already started and should be completed within the month."

DEATHWATCH 2000

Each installment of the **Deathwatch 2000** storyline will be polybagged with one of 22 specially produced trading cards featuring artwork by such top talents as Kevin Nowlan, Larry Stroman, Brian Bolland, Mark Texiera, Adam Kubert, Adam Hughes, and Neal Adams. Adams will do two She-Bat prism cards and one Lith Kasti the Fire-Bat card. According to Kristine Adams, the Fire-Bat card will feature a "super-duper gimmick which we're still working on. If it works, it'll be the coolest card in history."

Additionally, Continuity will randomly insert two hundred coupons in the polybagged books; these coupons will be redeemable for a special She-Bat lithograph signed by Adams.

So what about the already-announced storylines for ***Armor, Cyber-Rad,*** and other Continuity titles? According to Adams, "All the titles that we were working on before we decided to do the crossover will be printed directly after the crossover. ***Armor,*** for example, has been penciled and inked for six issues after the crossover..."

Continuity is optimistic that this major relaunch will convince fans to give the company's books another look—and they're convinced that once the fans take a look at these titles, they'll like what they see. Adams would like to use the Deathwatch 2000 storyline as a springboard for a major market push for Continuity. "If the fans and retailers react to us favorably, we'll be ready to print regularly," Adams said.

by Cliff Biggers

Last Week *CSN* featured the complete January Checklist. It's another big month and if you missed this one you're going to have a tricky month.

Next Week *CSN* will feature reviews. Don't miss it!

COMIC SHOP NEWS

Miss a Week and You Miss a Lot!

Have you seen anything in this issue of *Comic Shop News* that you can't live without? Make sure you don't miss it; clip this handy coupon and write down the things that you want you comics shop owner to be sure to get for you!

Name_____ Phone _____

I gotta have 'em! Please reserve for me the following items mentioned in *Comic Shop News!*

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Be sure to give this to your retailer. Do not send it to *CSN!* Your comics shop will make every effort to get the items you want; some items may require a down payment before your shop owner can get them for you; be sure to ask!

Alexandre Dumas Was Wrong...

...According to Armstrong!

Join the fun this December in
Archer & Armstrong/Eternal Warrior #8
A special DOUBLE SIZED edition by
Barry Windsor-Smith &

VALIANT

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MARVEL

BEGINNING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE

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#360

SPECTACULAR BRONZE METALLIC FOIL-EMBOSSED COVER!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, AVENGERS —

PREPARE TO DIE!

Writer: Bob Harras Penciler: Steve Epting Inker: Tom Palmer

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MARVEL AGE #123!
Thor, prepare to meet Thunderstrike!

MORBIUS #8!
Morbius is having one heck of a Nightmare!

SILVER SURFER/WARLOCK: RESURRECTION #2!
The search for Shalla Bal continues! Printed on Fanfare paper!

G.I JOE #135!
Polybagged with an exclusive trading card! The issue marks the re-launch of G.I. Joe!

HULK #406!
Can nothing stop the Hulk and the Juggernaut?

SUPER SOLDIERS #1!
Action-packed UK series premieres with a silver embossed logo!

ART FROM MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED #1!
Printed on Fanfare paper, this 64-page spectacular stars all your favorite Midnight Sons!

DOOM 2099 #4!
The explosive Tiger Wylde saga concludes!

Marvel Comics Shipping The Week Of February 16th